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International Narcotics

STAFF NOTES

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INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
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This publication is prepared by analysts in the Directorate of Intelligence for specialists in the Washington community who are interested in international narcotics matters. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Golden Triangle



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BURMA: Reduction in Raw Opium Traffic

Raw opium shipments from Burma during 1976 totaled 158 tons compared to 256 tons in 1975. Of this total 48 percent originated in the northern Shan State, 35 percent from Burmese Communist Party (BCP) controlled areas, and 17 percent from other areas of Burma. About 150 tons of these exports terminated at various points along the Burma-Thailand border. This included 67 percent at collection points and/or refineries on the Burmese side and 33 percent on the Thai side of the border. Receiving points for this opium remained concentrated in two major border regions: The Tachilek - Mae Sai - Lao Lo Chai area; and the area adjacent to Mae Hong Son Province, Thailand. The former area still receives the largest share of raw opium shipments, which in 1976 totaled 106 tons or 71 percent of the total.

The Kengtung area, which is a major transshipment point and marketing center for opium produced in BCP-controlled areas, accounted for about 35 percent of the raw opium shipped to the border. Most of this opium was delivered to the Tachilek area, generally by elements of the Fifth CTF organization.

Raw opium shipments from Burma took a significant downturn at the beginning of 1977. During January, raw opium shipments into the Burma-Thailand border area totaled a little over one ton. This compares with 11 tons shipped during January 1976. The downturn in the market was a reflection of the depressed market that has been in evidence throughout the Golden Triangle during the latter part of 1976 and early 1977.

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Burma: Raw Opium Exports by Area of Origin in 1975 and 1976

	<u>1975</u>		<u>1976</u>	
	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Percent</u>
N. Shan St.	134	53	75	48
B.C.P. Area	60	23	57	35
C. Shan St.	31	12	19	12
S. Shan St.	31	12	7	5
Total	<u>256</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>158</u>	<u>100</u>

Burma-Thailand: Raw Opium Imports into Border Area by Destination in 1975 and 1976

	<u>1975</u>		<u>1976</u>	
	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Tons</u>	<u>Percent</u>
S. E. Burma-Thailand Border	172	82	106	71
S. W. Burma-Thailand Border	37	18	44	29
Total	<u>209</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>150</u>	<u>100</u>



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NETHERLANDS: Growing Concern Over Narcotics Traffic

In early March, Dutch police and customs authorities called a meeting of their counterparts from seven other European countries and the US to share narcotics intelligence in the hope of intercepting heroin shipments they suspected were en route to Rotterdam. The meeting, called on short notice, was a first for the Netherlands--and possibly for Europe. It represents a big step toward regional cooperation in the fight against the narcotics traffic.

Documents discovered in Rotterdam, following the seizure of 126 kilograms of heroin and the arrest of three Chinese suspected traffickers, led Dutch authorities to suspect more heroin was en route from the Far East. On March 13 they met with officials from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, France, the UK, and the US, as well as from Interpol, to share their information. In addition, they sent the same data to anti-narcotics agencies in Bangkok and Hong Kong.

The Dutch are becoming increasingly concerned about the Netherlands' central role in the drug trade. There is a growing realization in The Hague that the type of cooperation and coordination this conference represents is essential in order to stop the use of their country as the main transshipment point for narcotics in Europe.

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NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

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THAILAND



Significance: Thailand is a major processing center and transshipment point for illicit opium and its by-products produced in the Golden Triangle, the traditional opium growing area straddling the Thai, Burmese, and Lao borders. Although a large portion of the narcotics transiting Thailand is destined for consumer markets within Asia, increasing supplies are finding their way into Europe where Chinese trafficking organizations have established new markets. At least 10 percent of the No. 4 heroin entering the US market is believed to be of Golden Triangle origin.

The upland areas of northwest Thailand produce about 50 tons of opium per year, nearly all of which is consumed by Thailand's large addict population. Although a 1959 law banned the growing of opium poppies in Thailand, political sensitivities toward the tribal cultivators and lack of government control in some growing areas have prevented the enforcement of the ban. Tribal groups in the upland areas are still dependent upon the opium poppy as their major cash crop. Crop substitution programs sponsored by the US and the UN have been instituted in several key villages but no significant decrease in poppy area has as yet been accomplished.

The raw opium produced in Burma is usually transported southward by caravan to the remote and generally under-policed areas on the Thai border. Most is processed at the numerous refineries straddling the Thai-Burma border, that are owned or managed by the major trafficking organizations operating between Burma and Thailand, such as the Shan United Army (SUA) and the 3rd and 5th Chinese Irregular Forces (CIF). In addition there are smaller paramilitary and tribal groups engaged in the traffic which also use Thailand as their base of operations.

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Thailand has historically been the corridor through which the bulk of opium and finished narcotics from the Golden Triangle has made its way into international markets. Powerful and far-flung smuggling organizations have operated for years throughout Thailand moving narcotics from the Thailand-Burma border area through Bangkok, by both air and sea, or overland into Malaysia whence they are transshipped elsewhere. The narcotics are smuggled through Thailand by foot, private automobile, taxi, bus, trucks, trains, and aircraft. Bangkok is a major marketing center for narcotics which are often transshipped south through Hatyai to Malaysia and Singapore. Alternate routings include the use of points along the Gulf of Thailand for movement by trawler or freighter to Hong Kong and other destinations. Narcotics destined for international markets outside of Asia are often smuggled aboard commercial aircraft in Bangkok for Hong Kong, Europe, and North America.

A large portion of the heroin produced in the Golden Triangle is consumed within Southeast Asia. The addict population in Thailand has been estimated at between 175,000-300,000 with Bangkok a major consumer market for No. 3 and No. 4 heroin. Estimated requirements for No. 4 heroin there are said to total 4,600 kilograms annually.

Problem:

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The new Thai government appears to be much more aware of the situation and is making a serious effort to correct deficiencies. The large volume of narcotics traffic through Thailand makes any control effort difficult, especially after the narcotics have left the Burmese-Thai border area. Because of the heavy freight and passenger traffic moving daily along the major north-south routes in Thailand, interdiction of illicit opiates is particularly difficult unless the police are informed in advance about specific shipments.

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Prospects: There have been noticeable, if perhaps temporary, improvements in the narcotics situation during the period since the new Thai government assumed power. Most traffickers still appear to be assessing the new government's anti-narcotics policies and have reduced their operations. However, the success of Thai anti-narcotics efforts will depend upon the determination of that government to eliminate the bases used by the major trafficking organizations within Thailand. Efforts are reportedly being made to force the SUA from Thai soil. Unless the Thai government also moves against the CIF and the other trafficking organizations based in Thailand and coordinates its anti-narcotics efforts with those of the Burmese government, only a temporary respite can be expected. [REDACTED]

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IRAN [REDACTED]

Significance: The role of Iran in the field of international narcotics control has increased appreciably in the past several years. Iran is basically a victim and a transit country. It has limited processing facilities to fulfill the needs of its 160,000 registered addicts.

Opium cultivation in Iran is aggressively controlled and no significant amount of Iranian-produced opium is known to have been diverted to illicit international traffic. In the past year, however, 20-30 percent of legal opium--over 240 tons a year--may have been diverted to illicit domestic markets.

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Nearly all of the illicit opium from neighboring Pakistan and Afghanistan is smuggled into Iran. Much remains in Iran where it is consumed by addicts who are not registered and serviced by the government. No significant amounts of opium smuggled into Iran are known to have reached US and European markets. Trafficking routes have been established, however, and substantial seizures have been made by Iranian authorities suggesting that Iranian traffickers may be organizing an Iranian connection for narcotics produced in Afghanistan and Pakistan destined for Western markets.

Most of the hashish smuggled into Iran from Afghanistan and Pakistan is transshipped to Western Europe by Iranian traffickers utilizing legitimate international truck shipments.

Problem: Iran does not currently constitute a problem in international trafficking of narcotics, but because of the location of the country and the long-established smuggling routes and networks, it does represent a persistent potential threat.

The Iranian government is stable and is committed to a policy of rigid control and enforcement.

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There are
an estimated 500,000-600,000 opium, and 20,000-40,000
heroin users in Iran.

Prospects: As long as the Shah remains in firm control
of the government, and there are no current identifiable
threats to government stability, Iran can be expected
to maintain its firm commitment to control both production
and trafficking.

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BRIEFS

TURKEY: Bulgarian border authorities have arrested two Turks who were trying to smuggle a total of 950 kilograms of a drug, probably hashish, into Bulgaria. The Turks undoubtedly intended to transport the contraband across Bulgaria and into Europe. One of the Turks, a laborer from Istanbul was apprehended with about 500 kilograms of the drug hidden in the gasoline tank of a truck. Bulgarian authorities are stepping up their narcotics control program, and these arrests, made on March 10 and 12, are the latest in a series. The amounts involved in the latest arrests are much larger than the usual seizures in this area. [REDACTED]

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NORWAY: The five-nation Nordic Council at its recent meeting reportedly discussed at length the international narcotics situation and, in particular, a Norwegian proposal to use development funds earmarked for less developed countries to combat illegal narcotics cultivation. According to an official who attended the council meeting, Norway announced that it intended to funnel about \$10 million through the UNFAO to be used for specific projects in the drug control program. Other council members indicated they would study the Norwegian proposal and the suggestion that they might wish to take similar action or join together in some joint program. [REDACTED]

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SPAIN: According to information from the UN, Spain has now ratified the Protocol Amending the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. [REDACTED]

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BANGKOK: According to a Bangkok press report, a Japanese narcotics courier recently died after swallowing several containers of heroin which he intended to smuggle into Japan. The Japanese trafficker was found dead in his hotel room on March 23, the day he was due to check out, and a post-mortem disclosed 12 small rubber bags of No. 4 heroin in his stomach. [REDACTED]

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THAILAND: The secretary general of the Thai Narcotics Control Board (NCB) on March 22 outlined the board's plan of action. He said it would consist of four basic elements: 1) suppression; 2) treatment; 3) crop substitution; and 4) prevention. As described, it would pull together the responsibilities which until now have been divided among several departments and offices in the Thai government. The embassy notes that, on paper, this new effort offers impressive additional evidence of the Prime Minister's firm commitment to an effective anti-narcotics program for Thailand [REDACTED]

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INTERESTING READING

UN Drug Official Reports Progress in Asian Countries
(INDONESIA)--TNDD, No. 289, March 16, 1977, pp. 4-6.

BTA Reports Bulgarian Narcotics Effort (BULGARIA)--TNDD,
No. 289, pp. 8-9.

Increasing Drug Consumption Worries Authorities (BOLIVIA)
--TNDD, No. 289, pp. 10-11.

Durazo 'Reorganizes' More Police Units (MEXICO)--TNDD,
No. 289, pp. 24-25.

International Train Presents Drug Control Problems
(FRANCE)--TNDD, No. 289, pp. 53-57.

Rome Heroin Shortage Causes Panic (ITALY)--TNDD, No. 289,
pp. 61-63.

Australian Tried in Bergen for Smuggling Narcotics (NOR-
WAY)--TNDD, No. 289, pp. 69-70.

Additional Details on Arrest of Two Chinese (NORWAY)--
TNDD, No. 289, pp. 72-75.

Heroin Seizure in Istanbul (TURKEY)--TNDD, No. 289, p. 77.

Seventeen Drug Deaths Registered in Munich for 1976 (WEST
GERMANY)--TNDD, No. 289, pp. 79-80.

West Berlin Drug Deaths, FRG Narcotics Problems Reviewed
(WEST GERMANY)--TNDD, No. 289, pp. 83-87.

Bulgarian Efforts to Stop Drug Traffic (BULGARIA)--TNDD,
No. 290, March 21, 1977, pp. 28-29.

*National Research Institute Reports Facts on Drug Ad-
diction* (BOLIVIA)--TNDD, No. 291, March 23, 1977,
pp. 40-41.

Hong Kong Traffickers Tell of Conspiracy (HONG KONG)--
TNDD, No. []/3/77, March 25, 1977, []
[], pp. 1-3.

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Drugs By Mail Under Investigation (HONG KONG)--TNDD, No. [] 3/77, pp. 22-23.

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Major Drug Ring Smashed in Canton (PRCHINA)--TNDD, No. [] 3/77, pp. 34-36.

Hill Tribes Find Opium Cultivation More Profitable Than Other Crops (THAILAND)--TNDD, No. [] 3/77, pp. 37-39.

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Police Drug-Squad Officer Interviewed on Heroin Wave (FRANCE)--TNDD, No. [] 3/77, pp. 48-52.

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Large Heroin Shipment Seized (UNITED KINGDOM)--TNDD, No. [] 3/77, p. 55.

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